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IO C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 5581
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INR SUBJ: ELECTION CAMPAIGN POSTURE IN AN GIANG
CIA
NSA REF: EMBASSY A-62, AUGUST 4, 1966
DOD
AID 1. ELECTION EVE FINDS POLITICAL POT SEETHING AND VC ACTIVITY SHARPLY UP IN AN GIANG. CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN MARKED BY CHARGES OF FAVORITISM, DISTRIBUTION ANONSUOUEC LEAFLETS TERMED "BLACK PROPAGANDA" BY SOME CANDIDATES, AND AT LEAST ONE SCUFFLE AT A CAMPAIGN MEETING.

RSR 2. HOA HAO FACTIONAL STRIFE IS GENERATING THE HEAT: LIST 1, LED BY LE QUANG LIEM, ENJOYS THE SUPPORT OF CENTRAL HOA HAO CHURCH ORGANIZATION, AND

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY Joan Irgens DATE 10/5/81
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IS BEING CHALLENGED BY LIST 3, TRAN VAN LANH, WHICH IS SUPPORTED SUB ROSA BY PROVINCE CHIEF LT. COL. LE BE PHAM AND OPENLY BY PROMINENT AN GIANG HOA HAO SUCH AS PROVINCE COUNCIL CHAIRMAN NGUYEN VAN HUO. LOCALS CHARGE "SAIGON CARPETBAGGERS" OF LIST 1 SPENDING LARGE SUMS OF MONEY UNDER THE TABLE, DISTRIBUTING "BLACK" PROPAGANDA (TWO UNATTRIBUTED LEAFLETS HAVE BEEN DISTRIBUTED IN LARGE NUMBERS), AND USING STRONG-ARM METHODS. LAST ACCUSATION RESULT OF FACT LIEM AND FELLOWS HAVE APPEARED AT CAMPAIGN MEETINGS ATTENDED BY HEAVILY ARMED BODYGUARDS. AT AUGUST 29 MEETING IN CHO MOI DISTRICT BODYGUARD ALLEGEDLY SO INCITED CROWD THAT MEETING BROKE UP IN DISORDER, WITH POLICE PROTECTION REQUIRED FOR CANDIDATES OF OTHER THREE LISTS. SCUFFLE INVOLVING UP TO TWENTY PERSONS TOOK PLACE, WITH, HOWEVER,

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NO SERIOUS INJURIES OR ARRESTS.

3. TENSION APPARENTLY REACHED POINT THAT BOTH SIDES TOOK STEPS TO COOL THINGS OFF. PROVINCE CHIEF ATTENDED NEXT CAMPAIGN MEETING AND STRESSED HIS NEUTRALITY THOUGH APPARENTLY WITHOUT GREAT SUCCESS. ON SEPTEMBER 3, LUONG

TRONG TUONG, CHAIRMAN OF CENTRAL HOA HAO CHURCH ORGANIZATION WHICH, DESPITE ITS SUPPORT FOR LIST (1 IN AN GIANG. CLAIMS TO BE SPOKEMAN FOR ALL HOA HAO ON NATIONAL SCENE, CAME TO AN GIANG AND APPEALED FOR MODERATION. EFFECT OF THESE STEPS ON HOA HAO PASSIONS UNCERTAIN, BUT CAMPAIGN HAS SINCE PROCEEDED IN A CALMER ATMOSPHERE.

4. LISTS (1 AND 3 ARE CERTAIN TO WIN AT LEAST ONE SEAT EACH. ONE OF THESE TWO WILL PROBABLY WIN A SECOND SEAT. THE REMAINING SEAT WILL PROBABLY FALL TO CATHOLIC LIST 2 (SEE REF AIR). LIST 4, WHICH WAS REINSTATED BY THE CENTRAL ELECTORAL COUNCIL AFTER DISQUALIFICATION BY THE PROVINCIAL ELECTORAL COUNCIL REPORTEDLY REPRESENTS HOA HAO VETERANS' ORGANIZATION AND THE "THREE-STAR" HOA HAO FACTION. LIST 4 SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN LOST IN SHUFFLE AS LOCAL HOA HAO ATTENTION FOCUSES ON DISPUTE BETWEEN LISTS 1 AND 3.

5. VC ANTI-ELECTION ACTIVITY HAS DISTURBED THE QUIET AN GIANG SCENE, NOTABLY THE BLOWING OF A BRIDGE ON ROUTE 10 BETWEEN LONG XUYEN AND CHAU DOC, AND AMBUSH WOUNDING OF CHAU THANH DISTRICT CHIEF NEAR

THE SCENE SEPTEMBER 8. SEVENTEEN VC HAVE BEEN APPREHENDED IN THE PROVINCE WITHIN LAST THREE WEEKS. SEVERAL ACKNOWLEDGED THEY HAD ELECTION SABOTAGE ASSIGNMENTS. PROVINCE CHIEF REPORTEDLY RECEIVED ASSASSINATION THREAT. TWO CLAYMORE MINES HAVE BEEN DISCOVERED PRIOR TO DETONATION, ONE ALONG ROAD FROM AIRFIELD TO PROVINCE CAPITAL. VC ACTIVITY OF THIS INTENSITY ALMOST UNHEARD OF IN THIS SHOWPLACE PROVINCE. VC ARE NOT, HOWEVER, BELIEVED CAPABLE OF SERIOUSLY HAMPERING THE ELECTION IN AN GIANG, WHERE VOTER TURNOUT IS EXPECTED TO RUN BETTER THAN 80 PERCENT OF PROVINCE'S 226,351 VOTERS.

6. IN EARLY AUGUST, (15TH INFANTRY REGIMENTAL HEADQUARTERS (9TH ARVN DIVISION) AND ONE OF ITS MANEUVER BATTALIONS COMPLETED PCS MOVE TO AN GIANG FROM KIEN PHONG. BATTALION HAS LARGE VOTING POTENTIAL (INCLUDING DEPENDENTS WHO MOVED WITH IT). BECAUSE BATTALION NOW PERMANENTLY STATIONED AN GIANG, ITS PERSONNEL ARE REQUIRED TO REGISTER FOR VOTING IN NORMAL FASHION, I.E., BE INCLUDED ON PROVINCE VOTING ROLLS. APPARENTLY

PAGE FIVE RUMJIR 5581 C O N F I D E N T I A L
BATTALION COMMANDER DROPPED BALL, THOUGHT HIS PEOPLE COULD VOTE PER SPECIAL PROVISION IN ELECTORAL LAW FOR UNITS DISPLACED ON ELECTION DAY FOR OPERATIONAL PURPOSES, AND FAILED TO REGISTER THEM BY CUT-OFF DATE AUGUST 20. PROVINCIAL ELECTORAL COUNCIL REFUSED TO EXTEND REGISTRATION PERIOD AND BATTALION WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO VOTE. ALTHOUGH IT IS TRUE GVN HAS NO CAUSE FOR CONCERN OR SPECIAL ELECTION AXE TO GRIND IN AN GIANG, THIS PROVIDES EVIDENCE THAT IN AT LEAST ONE PROVINCE ARVN NOT BEING ACCORDED SPECIAL ELECTION FAVORS.
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SEPT 9

September 8, 1966, 10:58 p.m.

1. WITH APPROACH OF ELECTION DAY, VIET CONG RADIO IN PAST FEW DAYS HAS INTENSIFIED ITS PROPAGANDA OUTPOURTAGE AGAINST SEPT 11 CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS.

2. RECENT BROADCASTS REPEAT FAMILIAR LINES CALLING FOR BOYCOTT AND SMASHING OF ELECTION "HOAX," DENOUNCING CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY, ETC. ONE BROADCAST OF SEPT 3 DECLARED THAT URBAN CITIZENS, ESPECIALLY THOSE IN SAIGON AREA, "ARE CLOSING RANKS, FORMING FRONT FOR UNIFIED ACTION, AND USING POLITICAL AND ARMED VIOLENCE" IN ORDER TO SMASH ELECTIONS. HOWEVER, IN APPARENT CONTRADICTION TO LETTER STATEMENT, SEPT 4 VC BROADCAST DIRECTED TO ARVN OFFICERS ON SUBJECT OF BOYCOTTING ELECTIONS SAID THAT "EVEN IN SAIGON, A PLACE WHICH CAN BE SAID TO BE

PAGE 2 RUMJIR 5580 C O N F I D E N T I A L
STABLE," ONLY SMALL NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS WILL VOTE.

3. IN LATTER BROADCAST AND IN PRIOR AUG 31 SOFT-SELL "TALK TO THE CANDIDATES," SOME INKLINGS OF VC POST-ELECTION ATTITUDE WERE BROOUGHT OUT. VC DISMISSED NOTION THAT ELECTION OR CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT WOULD IMPROVE OR STABILIZE SVN SITUATION, AND RE-ITERATED AGAIN THAT ONLY REMOVAL OF US TROOPS AND OVERTHROW OF GVN IS TRUE COURSE TO FOLLOW. IN BROADCAST TO ELECTION CANDIDATES, VC ATTEMPTED TO "REASON" WITH CANDIDATES BY TELLING THEM THAT FUTURE GOVERNMENT, WHETHER MILITARY OR CIVILIAN, WOULD NOT EXERCISE CONTROL IN VIEW OF PRESENCE OF US "IMPERIALISTS." PERHAPS IN ATTEMPT TO INFLUENCE THINKING OF CANDIDATES AND, AS A RESULT, COURSE OF CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY, VC SAID THAT "IF AMERICANS ALLOW YOU TO ASK FOR NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY AND US WITHDRAWAL, THIS WOULD BE A BREATHEABLE ATMOSPHERE INDEED..." BROADCAST THEN CALLED ON CANDIDATES TO RECTIFY THEIR "BLUNDERS" AND FOLLOW VOICE OF "REVOLUTION."

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 5594

SEPT 09

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

NVN FONMIN ISSUED STATEMENT ON SEPTEMBER 8 "SEVERELY CONDEMNING" CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS IN SVN. STATEMENT CONTAINED NOTHING THAT HAS NOT BEEN SAID PREVIOUSLY BY NORTH VIETNAMESE PROPAGANDA ORGANS ON INNUMERABLE PRIOR OCCASIONS. PERHAPS ONLY THING NOTEWORTHY ABOUT THIS STATEMENT IS FACT THAT IT CAME FROM FONMIN, STATEMENT WAS CARRIED BY BOTH HANOI RADIO BROADCAST BEAMED TO SVN

PAGE TWO RUMJIR 5594 C O N F I D E N T I A L
AND BY VNA INTERNATIONAL SERVICE, AND IT WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE REPLAYED ON MEDIA OF "FRATERNAL" SOCIALIST CAMP COUNTRIES. THIS LATEST STATEMENT ONCE AGAIN TESTIFIES TO SIGNIFICANCE WHICH HANOI ATTACHES TO SVN ELECTIONS. AS SUCH, REGIME HAS LET LOOSE ALL STOPS IN ITS PROPAGANDA MILL TO DISCREDIT ELECTIONS BOTH INTERNATIONALLY, AND DOMESTICALLY. GP-3. LODGE.
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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

RSR SUBJ: ELECTION ROUNDUP

1. WITH LESS THAN TWO DAYS LEFT BEFORE THE POLLS OPEN, WE SIZE UP THE ELECTION AS FOLLOWS:

2. MAJOR INGREDIENTS IN THE SITUATION ARE THE ATTITUDES AND ACTIONS OF THE VIET CONG, THE MILITANT INSTITUTE BUDDHISTS, THE CANDIDATES THEMSELVES--AND THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE.

3. THE PEOPLE (A) PRIMINKY WAS QUOTED RECENTLY BY WIRE

PAGE TWO RUMJIR 5584/1 C O N F I D E N T I A L
SERVICES AS SAYING THAT MOST DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE ELECTIONS. IT IS TRUE THAT MOST VIETNAMESE PROBABLY HAVE ONLY A VERY HAZY UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT IS MEANT BY A CONSTITUTION, MUCH LESS THE COMPLICATED SEQUENCE WHICH IT IS HOPED WILL LEAD ULTIMATELY TO A STABLE, POPULAR, LEGAL, ELECTED, CIVIL GOVERNMENT IN THIS COUNTRY. BUT THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE ARE CERTAINLY AWARE THAT AN ELECTION WILL BE HELD ON SEPTEMBER 11. THE COMBINED EFFORTS OF THE GVN, THE CANDIDATES, THE MILITANT BUDDHISTS AND THE VIET CONG HAVE UNDOUBTEDLY IMPRESSED ON ALMOST ALL ADULT VIETNAMESE THE FACT THAT AN ELECTION WILL BE HELD AND THAT IT WILL BE AN IMPORTANT EVENT.

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(B) ALMOST ALL VIETNAMESE ALSO KNOW THAT THIS ELECTION HAS BECOME A MAJOR CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THE GVN AND THE VIET CONG. PROBABLY 75 PERCENT OF THE ADULT POPULATION HAS BEEN TOUCHED DIRECTLY BY EITHER GVN GET-OUT-THE-VOTE EFFORTS OR VC ANTI-ELECTION PROPAGANDA, THREATS, AND TERROR. PERHAPS 50 PERCENT HAVE EXPERIENCED BOTH.

(C) IN SOME AREAS THE PEOPLE ARE ALSO AWARE OF AND INTERESTED IN INDIVIDUAL CANDIDATES. WHILE IN GENERAL

PAGE THREE RUMJIR 5584/1 C O N F I D E N T I A L
CANDIDATES HAVE PREFERRED PERSONAL CONTACT TO PUBLIC RALLIES AND SPEECHES, THERE HAVE BEEN SOME PERSONAL APPEARANCES, PARTICULARLY IN URBAN AREAS, WHERE CANDIDATES WERE SUBJECTED TO SHARP QUESTIONS AND EVEN HEATED DEBATE. IN BIEN HOA, FOR EXAMPLE, PARTISAN HECKLERS REMINDED ONE CANDIDATE THAT HE MADE THE SAME PROMISES WHEN RUNNING FOR THE PROVINCIAL COUNCIL, BUT HAS NOT YET DELIVERED. HOWEVER, IN MOST CASES IT IS EXPECTED THAT VOTERS WILL CAST THEIR BALLOTS ON BASIS CANDIDATES· RELIGIOUS, PARTY, OR MILITARY AFFILIATION. PROBABLY MANY WILL SIMPLY VOTE FOR MOST ATTRACTIVE CANDIDATES SYMBOL. (SIMPLE INDIVIDUAL SYMBOL SUCH AS HAT, RICE PLANT OR WATER BUFFALO APPEARS ON BALLOT ALONG WITH CANDIDATE'S NAME TO AID ILLITERATE VOTERS.)

(D) IN EYES OF MANY VIETNAMESE AS WELL AS FOREIGN OBSERVERS, SIZE OF VOTE WILL BE MORE IMPORTANT THAN WHICH CANDIDATES WIN. BIG TURNOUT WILL BE VIEWED AS REJECTION OF VIET CONG AND SUPPORT FOR KY REGIME. SMALL VOTE WILL BE READ IN SOME QUARTERS SO INCLINED AS EVIDENCE OF VC STRENGTH AND OPPOSITION TO PRESENT GOVERNMENT. BUT SMALL VOTE WOULD NOT RPT NOT MEAN POSITIVE SUPPORT FOR VC. IT WOULD ONLY

PAGE FOUR RUMJIR 5534/1 C O N F I D E N T I A L
BE TRIBUTE TO EFFECTIVENESS VC USE OF TERROR AGAINST CIVILIAN POPULATION.

(E) REGISTRATION HAS BEEN HEAVY. TOTAL OF REGISTERED VOTERS, 5,288,512, IS UP 12.7 PERCENT OVER REGISTRATION FOR LAST YEAR'S PROVINCIAL AND CITY COUNCIL ELECTIONS. THIS IS NO INDICATION OF SIZE OF VOTE, HOWEVER, BECAUSE

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IN MANY CASES REGISTRATION WAS VIRTUALLY INVOLUNTARY AND VC DID NOT SERIOUSLY OPPOSE REGISTRATION PROCESS.

(F) PREDICTIONS OF VOTER TURNOUT BY KNOWLEDGEABLE VIETNAMESE RANGE FROM 50 TO 70 PERCENT. MUCH WILL DEPEND ON PEOPLES' ESTIMATE OF GVN EFFECTIVENESS IN PROTECTING THEM FROM VC TERROR. IN FACT, MANY RURAL VOTERS WILL PROBABLY DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT TO VOTE BY BALANCING THREAT OF VC RETALIATION AGAINST GVN PRESSURES, BOTH PRESENT AND FUTURE.

(G) WE THINK VC AND BUDDHIST INSTITUTE MILITANTS WILL BE ABLE TO KEEP SOME VIETNAMESE FROM GOING TO POLLS. EITHER OR BOTH MAY DO SOMETHING DRAMATIC ON OR BEFORE ELECTION DAY WHICH WILL FURTHER DECREASE VOTE AND DRAW ATTENTION AWAY FROM TRUE SIGNIFICANCE OF ELECTIONS.

(H) ANY PREDICITION IS SHAKY, BUT WE THINK NOW THAT TURNOUT WILL BE ACCEPTABLE, PROBABLY 60 PERCENT OR BETTER.

4. THE VIET CONG. (A) THE EVIDENCE IS CONCLUSIVE THAT THE VIET CONG ARE MAKING A MAJOR EFFORT TO DISCREDIT AND DISRUPT THE ELECTIONS. THEIR EFFORT IS A MEASURE OF THEIR FEAR OF POPULAR, ELECTED GOVERNMENT.

(B) EVIDENCE OF THIS VC EFFORT IS ABUNDANT. THE VC RADIO HAS FOR SEVERAL WEEKS DEVOTED A MAJOR PART OF ITS AIR TIME TO ANTI-ELECTION ITEMS. IT HAS BROADCAST AN ORDER OF THE VC SAIGON-GIA DINH MILITARY COMMAND WHICH THREATENS THE LIVES OF THOSE WHO VOTE OR RUN AS CANDIDATES. THE VC RADIO HAS SPECIFICALLY TIED ALL VC TERROR TO THE VC ANTI-ELECTION CAMPAIGN, INCLUDING ATTACKS ON AMERICANS.

(C) THE OVERT ANNOUNCEMENT OF VC INTENTIONS BY THEIR RADIO IS CONFIRMED BY REPORTS WE GET FROM ALL PARTS OF THE COUNTRY OF INTENSIVE, OFTEN HOUSE-TO-HOUSE VC PROPAGANDA AND THREATS. IN GIA DINH, FOR EXAMPLE, WE KNOW OF 40 SEPARATE INCIDENTS OF THIS SORT IN THE PAST

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FEW DAYS. IN HUE THE GVN CAUGHT A TERRORIST WHO
ADMITTED THAT HIS MISSION WAS TO ASSASSINATE ALL
THREE MEMBERS OF ONE OF THE HUE SLATES. THE US 25TH
INFANTRY DIVISION CAPTURED A VC TOP SECRET DIRECTIVE
FROM THE VC CENTRAL COMMITTEE WHICH ORDERS ALL SUBORDINATE
UNITS TO CONDUCT ANTI-ELECTION PROPAGANDA, CARRY
OUT AT LEAST THREE ACTS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST LOCAL
OFFICIALS, AND SET EXPLOSIVES AT BALLOT BOX
LOCATIONS.

(D) OVERT PROPAGANDA, THREATS AND VIOLENCE INCIDENTS
ARE THE TOP OF THE ICEBERG. SINCE JULY THE
VC HAVE ALSO CONDUCTED SYSTEMATIC SUBSURFACE CAMPAIGN
DESIGNED TO INTIMIDATE VOTERS. OVERT TERROR IS
INTENDED TO MAKE THEIR THREATS OF REPRISALS CREDIBLE.
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ADVANCE COPY TO S/S-O 9/9/66, 1:50 A.M.
PASSED WHITE HOUSE, DOD, CIA, USIA, NSA 9/9/66, 1:50 A.M.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION TWO OF TWO SAIGON 5584

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5. THE GVN (A) THE GVN IS ALSO MAKING A MAJOR EFFORT, PERHAPS THE SINGLE GREATEST EFFORT IT HAS SO FAR UNDERTAKEN IN ITS 14 MONTHS IN OFFICE. WE HAVE SEEN, SOMEWHAT TO OUR SURPRISE, AN AGGRESSIVE AND GENERALLY EFFECTIVE INFORMATION CAMPAIGN BY THE VIETNAMESE INFORMATION SERVICE. THIS HAS BEEN SUPPLEMENTED BY LOCAL OFFICIALS, AND WE HAVE HELPED FROM BEHIND THE SCENES. SECURITY FORCES HAVE INTENSIFIED THEIR ACTIVITIES. ON ELECTION DAY THE MILITARY WILL MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO SECURE THE POLLS AND THE MAJOR ROADS LEADING TO POLLING PLACES. CANDIDATES HAVE

PAGE TWO RUMJIR 5584/2 C O N F I D E N T I A L
SPECIAL GUARDS AND IN SOME PLACES THE CANDIDATES ARE SLEEPING UNDER HEAVY POLICE GUARD.

(B) LOCAL OFFICIALS ARE WELL AWARE THAT THE DECISION OF WHETHER OR NOT TO VOTE HINGES HEAVILY ON ESTIMATES OF GVN PRESSURE VS VC THREATS. IN QUANG TIN PROVINCE THE PROVINCE CHIEF TOLD A CONSULATE OFFICER THAT HE WILL REWARD ANY DISTRICT CHIEF WHO TURNS OUT MORE THAN 80 PERCENT OF THE VOTERS REGISTERED IN HIS DISTRICT -- AND THOSE DISTRICT CHIEFS WHO TURN OUT LESS THAN 80 PERCENT WILL BE CHASTISED. THE SAME PROVINCE CHIEF IS LETTING IT BE KNOWN THAT THOSE WHO FAIL TO VOTE MAY FIND IT DIFFICULT TO TRAVEL IN THE PROVINCE AFTER THE ELECTIONS. IN MANY AREAS, SAIGON INCLUDED, LOCAL OFFICIALS ARE HAND CARRYING VOTER REGISTRATION CARDS TO VOTERS WHO

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FAILED TO PICK THEM UP. NO DOUBT THE NEGLIGENT VOTER IS ALSO APPRISED OF HIS CIVIC DUTIES WHEN HE GETS HIS REGISTRATION CARD. IN THUA THIEN PROVINCE, WHERE THE "STRUGGLE" WAS STRONGEST, THE ARMY IS ENGAGED IN AN EXTENSIVE INFORMATION DRIVE: ONE OF THEIR DOCUMENTS ADVISES THAT "THE MILITARY HAVE THE DUTY TO PUSH AND

PAGE THREE RUMJIR 5584/2 C O N F I D E N T I A L
GUIDE FRIENDS AND RELATIVES TO VOTE".

(C) PRIMIN KY MADE A MAJOR PRE-ELECTION SPEECH AUGUST 25 IN WHICH HE PLEDGED "WITH ALL THE HONOR OF A SOLDIER" THAT THE ELECTIONS WILL BE FREE. HE BACKED UP THIS PLEDGE OF A TRULY FREE ELECTION WITH A DECREE SPECIFYING PRISON SENTENCES FOR ANYONE FOUND "GUILTY OF INTERFERING WITH CITIZENS' RIGHT TO VOTE OR FREEDOM TO STAND FOR ELECTION".

6. MILITANT INSTITUTE BUDDHISTS. (A) WITH TAM CHAU STILL ON "SICK LEAVE" IN VUNG TAU, THE MILITANTS ARE VERY MUCH IN CONTROL OF THE BUDDHIST INSTITUTE. THEY GIVE EVERY INDICATION OF INTENDING TO DO EVERYTHING THEY CAN THINK OF TO DISRUPT THE ELECTION. TRI QUANG SEPTEMBER 3 TOLD AN AMERICAN VISITOR THAT HIS OBJECTIVE IS STILL THE REMOVAL OF THIEU AND KY, AND TO THIS END HE CONTINUES HIS HUNGER FAST. ON SEPTEMBER 5 A MEMBER OF THE INSTITUTE COUNCIL TOLD AN EMBOFF THAT NOT ONLY WILL THE INSTITUTE CONTINUE TO OPPOSE THE ELECTIONS,

PAGE FOUR RUMJIR 5584/2 C O N F I D E N T I A L
BUT IT WILL ALSO OPPOSE THE CONVENTION WHICH RESULTS AND IT WILL OPPOSE ANY CONSTITUTION WHICH THE CONVENTION MAY WRITE. ON SEPTEMBER 6 THE INSTITUTE MILITANTS HELD A PRESS CONFERENCE IN WHICH THEY REITERATED THEIR DEMANDS FOR AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT, THEIR OPPOSITION TO THE ELECTIONS, AND ANNOUNCED A 72 HOUR HUNGER STRIKE SEPTEMBER 8 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 11.

(B) THE EFFECT OF THE INSTITUTE MILITANTS ON THE VOTERS IS DIFFICULT TO JUDGE. CERTAINLY THE INSTITUTE HAS LOST MUCH PRESTIGE AND INFLUENCE IN THE PAST FEW MONTHS. IT IS DEEPLY AND PUBLICLY DIVIDED. EVEN SOME TRI QUANG FOLLOWERS HAVE SAID PRIVATELY THAT THEY ARE

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FED UP WITH POLITICS. TAM CHAU AND A NUMBER OF OTHER MONKS ARE KNOWN TO BE PROVATELY ADVISING PEOPLE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ELECTIONS.

(C) AT THE SAME TIME WE HAVE REPORTS OF SOME BUDDHIST LEADERS IN THE PROVINCES INSTRUCTING THEIR PEOPLE AGAINST VOTING. WE ALSO HAVE REPORTS THAT SUGGEST THE MILITANTS ARE PLANNING IMMOLATIONS. TRI QUANG MAY EVEN MAKE GOOD ON HIS THREAT TO BECOME A MARTYR.

(D) THE RESULT OF BUDDHIST MILITANT ACTIVITY IN OUR OPINION WILL LIKELY BE A NET DECREASE IN THE VOTE BY SEVERAL PERCENTAGE POINTS. IT WILL ALSO FURTHER DISCREDIT THE INSTITUTE IN THE EYES OF MANY VIETNAMESE.

7. THE CANDIDATES. (A) THERE ARE 532 CANDIDATES STILL IN THE RACE, OVER FIVE PER SEAT ON THE AVERAGE. IN TWO DISTRICTS CANDIDATES ARE RUNNING UNOPPOSED BUT ALMOST EVERYWHERE ELSE THERE ARE LIVELY CONTESTS. THE CANDIDATES ARE BOTH MEN AND WOMEN, YOUNG AND OLD, OF ALL RELIGIONS, AND REPRESENTING A WIDE RANGE OF PROFESSIONS. THERE ARE 52 MILITARY CANDIDATES, BUT AS MANY ARE RUNNING AGAINST EACH OTHER WE THINK THERE IS NO DANGER OF EXCESSIVE MILITARY REPRESENTATION. WE THINK THE CANDIDATES ARE A GOOD CROSS SECTION OF THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE, AND CONVENTION SHOULD BE A TRULY REPRESENTATIVE BODY.

(B) IN THEIR CAMPAIGNS MOST CANDIDATES HAVE STUCK TO GENERALITIES SUCH AS FREEDOM, INDEPENDENCE, AND DEMOCRACY. VERY FEW HAVE PUBLICLY OUTLINED THEIR VIEWS ON THE FORM OF THE FUTURE CONSTITUTION. THE MAJORITY WHOM OUR OFFICERS HAVE CONTACTED ARE FIRMLY IN FAVOR OF A STRONG EXECUTIVE,

BUT THEIR

(C) IN KEEPING WITH VIETNAMESE POLITICAL TRADITION, A GREAT DEAL OF THE ELECTIONEERING IS SUBSURFACE. THERE IS WIDESPREAD USE OF CAMPAIGN WORKERS, AND EXPERIENCE WHICH MAY SERVE TO EDUCATE SOME POLITICAL LEADERS IN WAYS TO BUILD A TRUE POLITICAL PARTY IN THE FUTURE.

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8. SUMMARY. THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN HAS GONE WELL TO DATE AND WE BELIEVE THE ELECTION WILL RESULT IN A REPRESENTATIVE BODY ABLE TO DRAW UP A WORKABLE CONSTITUTION. THERE IS DANGER THAT THE VIET CONG OR THE MILITANT INSTITUTE BUDDHISTS WILL DRAW ATTENTION AWAY FROM THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS ELECTION BY SOME DRAMATIC OR VIOLENT ACT ON THE EVE OF THE ELECTION. BUT WE DO NOT THINK THEY CAN FRUSTRATE OR SERIOUSLY INTERFERE WITH THE ELECTION. THE VIET CONG AND INSTITUTE MILITANTS WILL REDUCE THE VOTER TURNOUT, BUT WE ANTICIPATE THAT THE SIZE OF THE VOTE WILL BE RESPECTABLE NEVERTHELESS.
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NOTE: Advance copy to S/S-O 2:30 p.m., September 9.

Passed White House, DOD, CIA, USIA, NSA 2:30 a.m., September 9.

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R 090959Z SEP 66
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC
INFO RUHLHQ/CINCPAC
ZEN/AMCONSUL DANANG
ZEN/AMCONSUL HUE
STATE GRNC
BT

Control: 7602
Sep. 9, 1966, 10:14 AM

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 5602

SEPTEMBER 09.

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

SUBJ: CA ELECTION: CHAU DOC PROVINCE

REF : A-62, AUGUST 4, 1966

1. VC ANTI-ELECTION ACTIVITY HAS INCREASED TENSION ON ELECTION EVEN IN CHAU DOC. MOST SPECTACULAR ACT TO DATE WAS SEPTEMBER 8 DESTRUCTION OF BRIDGE ON ROUTE 10, ONLY LAND ROUTE BETWEEN CHAU DOC AND OUTSIDE. (PROVINCE CAPITAL CHAU PHU HAS NO LANDING STRIP. VC ALSO PENETRATED CHAU PHU ON EVENING OF SEPTEMBER 4 AND GRENADE VILLAGE OFFICE 400 YARDS FROM SPECIAL FORCES/MACV COMPOUND, DISTRIBUTED ANTI-ELECTION PROPAGANDA, AND FIRED SEVERAL SHOTS IN AIR.

2. CHAU DOC HAS BEEN PROMISED THREE ARVN BATTALIONS WHICH WILL BE POSITIONED TO PREVENT LARGE-SCALE VC TROOP MOVEMENTS OUT OF SEVEN MOUNTAINS REDOUBT. PROVINCE OFFICIALS BELIEVE THAT 75 TO 80 PCT OF CHAU DOC'S 178,000 REGISTERED VOTERS WILL TURN OUT ON ELECTION DAY.

3. DESPITE VC ACTIVITY, ELECTION INTEREST HAS INCREASED, WITH CANDIDATES DRAWING AUDIENCES OF 2,000-3,000.

4. POLITICAL PICTURE REMAINS LARGELY AS REPORTED REF AIR. HOA HAO POLITICS PREDOMINATE, WITH TWO OF THREE HOA HAO LISTS IN HOT CONTENTION FOR TWO ASSEMBLY SEATS. LIST 4, LED BY HO VAN LANG, HAS APPARENTLY PICKED UP SUPPORT IN CONTEST WITH LIST 5, HEADED BY HUYNH VAN LAU. LAU HAS SUPPORT OF CENTRAL HOA HAO CHURCH ORGANIZATION. EACH COULD WIN A SEAT, WITH POPULAR ARVN MEDICAL DOCTOR PHAM VAN TRIET, LIST 2, AN INDEPENDENT, A DARK HORSE POSSIBILITY. LIST 1, HEADED BY LE THI NU, WEALTHY HOA HAO LANDOWNER, NOT ACCORDED MUCH CHANCE. THACH SUNG REMAINS FAVORITE TO DEFEAT THACH KEMERINT FOR CHAU DOC CAMBODIAN SEAT.

GP-4.
BT

LODGE

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